CATCH – Information note

The EU is a major importer of fishery products and, as a market State, bears paramount responsibility in the fight against illegal fishing.

CATCH is an IT system that aims to digitalise the currently paper-based EU catch certification scheme as laid down by the Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 (*Council Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 of 29 September 2008 establishing a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing*)[1].

Version 1.0 was launched on 7 May 2019 by Commissioner Vella at Seafood Expo in Brussels.

In order to ensure that fisheries products imported into the EU market stem from legal sources, fishery consignments need to be accompanied by a Catch Certificate validated by the flag State of the catching vessel in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008. More than 90 flag States have notified their competent authorities to validate certificates for export of fishery products into the EU territory.

The objective behind CATCH is to develop a web-based application to support the management (issuance, control and verification) of official documents and to automate the related procedures as laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 and its annexes.

The application uses the TRACES.NT system developed by the European Commission, which is a digital management tool for all sanitary requirements on importation of animals, food, feed and plants. TRACES.NT has been in use since the early 2000s in all EU Member States and connects more than 80 countries worldwide, simplifying and accelerating the trading process.

CATCH has been included as part of the revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation (Amendment of Article 12 of the EU IUU Regulation)[2]. Until the adoption of the proposal (which is expected in 2020/2021**), this IT system will be used on a voluntary basis by EU Member States and their national operators.** While being a considerable driver for the reduction of the

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02008R1005-20110309&from=EN
[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:6d8cdc8b-63f7-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

administrative burden reduction for all actors involved, **the use of the system will remain voluntary for third countries even after the adoption of the legal basis**.

CATCH version 1.0 includes catch certificates, processing statements, importer declarations and risk-management tools. Other documents as laid down in the EU IUU Regulation (i.e. simplified catch certificate) will be part of future versions/releases of the system developed by the Commission with active involvement of EU Member States.

- **When can I start using CATCH?**

The system is now up and running, which means that catch certificates, processing statements and importer declarations can be created via the TRACES NT platform. **However, the system will initially only be accessible to EU Member States administrations and EU operators. Access for third countries is expected later in 2019/2020.**

Access to the TRACES NT environment by operators has to be granted by Member States' administrations (and later by the administrations of third countries to operators in third countries).

- **Do I have a legal obligation to use CATCH?**

Currently, there are no legal requirements for operators or authorities to use CATCH. However, in the current proposal for revision of the Fisheries Control Regulation, the Commission has included provisions to make the use of CATCH obligatory for EU importers. **This means that, until the revised Fisheries Control Regulation is in force, the use of the system will be on voluntary basis for all.**

The European Commission cannot and does not wish to impose its system on non-EU countries. However, TRACES NT is a platform/environment already used by 60 third countries for meeting food safety requirements and some of them have already shown interest in CATCH. Its use by non-EU countries' operators and competent authorities would constitute an important reduction of the administrative burden.

- **How can I gain access?**

New users can apply for access directly in the system, following simple instructions provided on the screen in TRACES NT and choosing the operator or authority for which you would like to receive access.

In terms of how the system itself operates, the **Commission only provides access to the top authority** level in Member States and third countries and from there it is a **delegated access management model**. This is a more efficient and secure method of managing access rights than if a central helpdesk manages everything.

This means that an operator will have to contact the top authority in his country to obtain access via TRACES NT.

- **When will the workflow be paperless?**

The workflow is now **importer driven**, i.e. EU importers enter the data in the CATCH IT system (taken from paper-based documents).

Before introducing a fully paperless environment, third countries' administrations, as well as exporters, will have to use the system. **The European Commission cannot impose its system on non-EU countries.** However, 60 non-EU countries already use the TRACES NT platform/environment for food health requirements and some of them have already shown interest in CATCH.

- **Will there be automatic alerts in the system and a risk scale display in accordance with the Commission's criteria and EFCA's risk methodology to help Member States target controls?**

In CATCH version 1.0, only basic risks such as quantity overshooting or double use of catch certificates will create alerts. Future versions of the systems, and once the system contains actual data, will include more risk management criteria.